

**THE CHURCH OF THE
HOLY CROSS**

(EPISCOPAL)



Stateburg, South Carolina

FOREWORD



N gratitude to those who lived, loved, and wrought so well in this community aforetime I dedicate this small tribute. Having, since childhood, known and loved this old building, and those who built it, and now so peacefully sleep around it, I have found it a pleasure to gather from the old records these facts, that others might learn how and why this beautiful Church came to be here.

JOHN R. SUMTER.

1930.

In Sumter County, among the picturesque "High Hills of the Santee," lies the Township of Stateburg.

Upon the crest of one of these hills, and overlooking a fertile valley which stretches westward to the banks of the Wateree, once nestled a small village called Stateburg.

William Gilmore Sims in his history of South Carolina writes: "Stateburg, a village of the hills, beautifully situated among them, is four miles east of the Wateree. It is a small and unimproving hamlet, founded in 1783 by General Sumter. It contains three Churches, (one Episcopal and two Baptists) an academy, a library, and an agricultural society. The population like that of Sumterville, is also small—a fact not easily accounted for, since it stands in a situation of great salubrity, such beauty, and in the center of a wealthy and refined community."

Pioneer settlers had been drifting into this section of the country probably since 1735, although Robert Mills, the historian, gives the date of the permanent settlement as being 1750. Just south of where this little village stood, and facing upon what was once an Indian trail and later became the King's Highway leading from the seacoast to the settlements of the upper Carolinas, stands the present Church of the Holy Cross. Up to the year 1770 the inhabitants of this section had been obliged to worship at St. Mark's Church, in what

is now Clarendon County, necessitating a long and wearisome journey.

In that year, the vestry and wardens of St. Mark's Parish petitioned the assembly to "grant them a sum of money to build them a Church and a parsonage house, as the distance to be traveled was too great to render Divine worship practical or convenient."

They further stated that the parish had subscribed five hundred pounds for the building of a Chapel of ease, at or near the high hills. Which sum being inadequate, they therefore petitioned for help from the Assembly.

As a result such a Chapel was built at or near the plantation of Peter Mellette,

In the year 1788 this chapel having become inadequate for the needs of the fast increasing congregation, a vestry was organized and called the Vestry of the Claremont Church.

This vestry was composed of the following persons:

General Thomas Sumter
William Murrell,
George Ioor
Isham Moore
William Bracey
J. McNair
William Rees

Wardens:

Benjamin Waring
J. G. Guignard.

This vestry held a meeting at Stateburg on July 23d, 1788, and elected Matthew Tate as Minister to the Claremont Church. It was "recommended that he hold services in Mr. Powell's long room until a more suitable place of worship could be erected for that purpose." A contract was entered into for the erection of a Church. This building to be fifty-one feet long, thirty-seven feet broad and seventeen feet high, with twelve arched window and four doors. This building, the contractors, William Bromby and J. Porter agreed to furnish at a cost of 175 pounds. This Church was at once erected upon a site given for that purpose by General Thomas Sumter, the deed for which, witnessed by Governor Stephen D. Miller, is among the records in the Court House in Sumter.

It was proposed and agreed upon at a meeting of the vestry March 21st, 1788, "that the Glebe lands and Church near Half-Way swamp, (which formerly belonged to the Episcopal Church of St. Mark's Parish but now to this Church) should be sold, provided it sells for one hundred guineas at the least."

At a meeting held 21st day of April, 1794, the vestry made the following order: "That the said Church Wardens do write to Edward Richardson, requesting payment for the Glebe and Church lands on which he now resides, agreeably to his promises and a contract made by William McConico—and that if he shall fail to comply therewith suit shall be brought against the said William Mc-

Connico, by the next return day for Camden District."

This Church after serving for some sixty years, was also deemed unsuitable for the needs of an increased and wealthier congregation, and steps were taken to raise funds to erect upon the same site a more suitable building. This was done and the name of the new Church was changed to the Church of the Holy Cross.

The corner stone of the new building was laid with appropriate ceremony on the eleventh day of September, 1850.

The building committee of this Church was William Wallace Anderson, M. D., Samuel Bradley and Henry L. Pinckney, Dr. Anderson serving as chairman. The architect of the building was Edward C. Jones, of Charleston, S. C. The Church was consecrated July 14, 1852 by Bishop Francis Huger Rutledge, Bishop of the Diocese of Florida, but a native of South Carolina. The Bishop of this Diocese, Christopher C. Gadsden, being too ill at the time to conduct the services.

After the storms and stress of eighty years this Church, with little change, still stands a monument to the culture and taste of those who had it built to the honor and glory of God. Its exterior appearance only marred by the absence of the graceful spire and cross which once surmounted the tower at the northwestern corner, which with a portion of the northwestern wall, were wrecked

by a storm in 1903. The beauty of the interior still remains, and the passing years have but served to soften and enhance its charm.

Worthy of note, in addition to its architectural perfection, are the stained glass windows of exquisite coloring, the handsome marble altar, with the hand-carved reredos. The pulpit and quaint old pipe organ, and the deeply religious air of the Chancel, makes it worth more than a casual glance from the visitor. Within its Holy of Holies there seems to breathe that "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

The walls of this Church were built of pise at the insistence of the chairman of the building committee, Dr. W. W. Anderson, who was an enthusiastic believer in the longevity of this material. The test of time has proved that his judgment was sound and his confidence not misplaced.

The Rectory is situated about two miles east of the Church on Route 76 from Columbia to Sumter. It is a small two story wooden building.

In the preservation of this Church, through fair and stormy days the women of this community have borne the major part. Their efforts have known no task too formidable, no effort too great for their courage to surmount.

